



INFORMATION GUIDE

The purpose of this guide is to provide important information about applying for City of Columbus jobs and taking Columbus Civil Service exams.

Please visit us on our website: www.csc.columbus.gov

Job line: (614) 645-7667

Address: Columbus Civil Service Commission
50 W. Gay Street, 6th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

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INTRODUCTION TO CIVIL SERVICE



The City of Columbus employs about 9000 people in several hundred job titles. City employees help to improve the quality of life for city residents. They do interesting work; enjoy good pay, great benefits, and opportunities for advancement.

This information guide has been prepared to aid you in the City of Columbus application and test taking process. The test-taking information is not intended to cover specific information regarding any particular examination, but is to be used as a general guide in preparation for a Columbus Civil

Service examination. **The announcement for the examination will state when specific study materials or resources are available and how they can be obtained.** Also, a separate guide is provided to those who are interested in becoming Police Officers or Firefighters.

How do I find out about a job with the City of Columbus?

It is very easy to get information about jobs with the City of Columbus. In fact, you can be notified at home, by mail, every time the City is accepting applications from the general public for a job you would like.

It is not necessary for you to personally visit the Commission offices in order to begin your job search with the City. The key to getting started is the completion of a “**Job Interest Form.**” On this form you may identify the names of up to ten (10) jobs for which you would like to be considered. Descriptions of City jobs can be viewed under the “**Job Openings**” section of our website.

Once you've submitted your form to our office, this information will remain active for a period of six (6) months. If during the next six (6) months the City is accepting applications for a job you listed on the form, you will receive information at your home about how and when to file an application. Job Interest Forms are available on the website, at www.csc.columbus.gov, at the Commission office located at 50 W. Gay Street, 6th floor, or can be obtained by calling (614) 645-8369.

If you want to see what jobs are currently open for applications, you can visit this website at www.csc.columbus.gov. Job announcements are also posted at the Civil Service Commission, 50 W. Gay Street, Room 600, and are available through numerous other organizations in the community.

Additional questions about this information can be directed to the Commission's Applicant and Employee Services Unit, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at (614) 645-8369.

Must I live within the City limits to apply for a job with the City of Columbus?

The City has no “residency requirement” for either job openings or examinations. However, the City does have a “residency requirement” in hiring. That means that unless otherwise specifically provided by the [City Charter](#), all employees must at all times, during their employment, maintain their residence within the boundary lines of Franklin County or one of its six (6) adjoining counties.

How do I apply for an exam?

If you are interested in a job that is tested, you will need to file an application with the Commission. If you filed a Job Interest Form, the Commission will notify you when it is accepting applications for those positions or exams.

Otherwise, you will need to check the website, job line or job postings. You may obtain an application packet at the Civil Service Commission, Room 600.

Some applications can also be filed online. As you complete the application, make sure that you pay close attention to the “minimum qualifications” for the job. Describe the areas of your experience or education that show you meet those requirements. When your application is reviewed, our staff will match the experience and training on your application with the requirements given on the announcement to determine if you qualify for the exam.



What are some tips for completing an application for an exam?

All applications must be filed in person, unless you live outside of Franklin County or an adjoining county.

1. Type, print or legibly write all information on the appropriate form. No credit can be given for information that cannot be read or is incomplete.
2. Complete all sections of the application that apply to you.
3. Be sure to present the appropriate drivers license, occupational license, or certificate for any posting that requires possession of a license or certificate. In order to insure proper credit, licenses and certificates must be presented at the time of application.
4. Be sure to present an original of your transcript and/or diploma for any job posting that requires possession of a degree or specific course work.
5. Be sure to present an original of your DD214 (Member 4, or other original documentation) if you are requesting veteran's preference. In most cases this form must be submitted by the last date of testing.
6. Be specific in describing your work history.
 - a. Include dates and hours worked. Only partial credit (and in some cases, zero credit) will be given if this information is missing.

- b. Do not assume that the title you held is sufficient to describe the duties you performed. Provide accurate, detailed information about the duties you performed. Where details are not given, it will be assumed that your experience did not include what is required by the minimum qualifications.
 - c. Describe each title separately. Do not combine duties performed for more than one title held at one employer. This is usually unclear to the reader and credit may not be properly awarded. Use a separate work history block on the application form for each separate title you have held. Also make sure the dates accurately reflect the actual time period each separate title was held.
 - d. The amount of space provided on the application is neither the minimum nor the maximum amount desired. If you need more space, use the continuation sheets provided by Civil Service or a plain sheet of paper (type or print your name and social security number on all attachments) for those descriptions that continue beyond the work history block.
 - e. Make sure your statements are clear. If you describe your experience by saying “performed administrative functions,” we cannot tell the nature of the work. A better description might be, “developed and coordinated policies and procedures; made arrangements and prepared materials for meetings and conferences.”
 - f. Do not assume a resume will replace the information required for an application. All information on the application must be completed in order to determine whether you meet the necessary minimum qualifications.
7. Do not forget to sign and date your application. Each application submitted must have an original signature.
8. Do not falsify any information on your application. All information provided is subject to verification.
9. File your application during the filing period. Do not miss the deadline.

What happens if I don't meet the minimum qualifications for the exam?

If the application reviewer determines that the combination of education and experience you described on your application doesn't meet the “minimum qualifications” or needs to be verified, you will get a rejection notice from the Civil Service Commission that tells you what education or experience you lack. You will be given a chance to clarify what you told us before and/or provide verification of education or licensure information. If you did not clearly state all your relevant experience or education the first time, this is your opportunity. The Commission will only accept information that clarifies what you stated on your application. The notice of rejection is not an opportunity to add new information to your application.

How do I apply for a current job opening?

If you are interested in a current vacancy, you will need to file a department [Applicant Response Form](#) with the department that has the vacancy. If you filed a Job Interest Form,

the Commission will notify you when departments are accepting applications. Make sure you pay close attention to the “minimum qualifications” for the job. Since the department Applicant Response Form provides limited space, you may want to send a resume along with it so that the department that has the vacancy can have more information about your experience, education and training. You can mail your department Applicant Response Form directly to the City department that has the vacancy or you can submit your Applicant Response Form online and mail your resume. To ensure consideration, the department must receive the department Applicant Response Form by the due date indicated on the vacancy announcement. The department will then review your response form and determine if you will be interviewed for the position.

How do I apply for more than one job opening or exam?

You must complete a separate form for every job or exam for which you want to be considered. Remember that every job classification will have different qualifications. Include information about your educational background, experience, and relevant licenses you hold that shows that you meet the “minimum qualifications” stated on the announcement.

What happens to applications for job openings and examinations that are submitted after the deadline?

Applications submitted after the final filing dates are not accepted. The announcement is considered to be a kind of contract with the public. In order to be fair to everyone who sees the announcement, we must reject any application that's submitted after the closing date for applications. So it's important to pay close attention to all the dates on the announcement.

When are letters admitting candidates to the exam sent out?

Admission letters or approval notices are sent out one to two weeks before the exam date. If you have not received your notice and you believe a reasonable mailing period has lapsed, you should call the Civil Service Commission at (614) 645-8300.

How does the City select applicants to hire?

Obtaining a job with the City is much like obtaining a job with private companies, except the City like most government agencies relies more upon testing as a way to assess the qualifications of applicants. The most common way to be hired is to apply and then take a test. The Commission assesses the abilities of the applicants and places the names of the successful ones on a list. Any applicant whose name is not on the list cannot be hired for the job in question. However, just because someone's name is placed on the list does not mean that person will get a job. Each list is usually divided into three bands with applicants being placed in either the 70, 80 or 90 band based upon their test performance. Placement on the list only means that the person can be considered for the job along with the other applicants in the band.

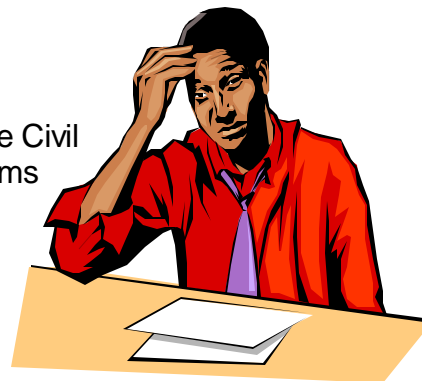
For non-competitive City jobs, instead of a test, the Commission reviews the qualifications of the applicants. These jobs generally are either unskilled, require special licensing (so testing has already been done by the State of Ohio), or they require advanced education, i.e. college education. For these jobs, applicants initially apply directly with the department doing the hiring. The department screens the candidates and then a formal Civil Service Commission application is completed so the Commission staff can ensure the applicant

meets the established minimum qualifications for the job.

CIVIL SERVICE EXAMS

Why do I have to take an exam?

Competitive testing ensures the public access to City jobs. The Civil Service Commission staff develops and administers valid exams that are designed to measure important knowledge, skills and abilities that are needed for successful job performance. Competitive testing helps to determine the most qualified persons for the job based on their performance on the exam and their ability to demonstrate those knowledge, skills and abilities.



Do all jobs require an exam?

Not all jobs require an exam, but about 80% of all City jobs do.

What is a “provisional” job opening?

On very rare occasions, a job may be filled on a “provisional,” meaning a temporary, basis. This happens when there is an immediate vacancy for a job that should be tested but the Commission has not given the test. In such a case, the department may choose anyone who meets the minimum qualifications for the job. However, the test will be given eventually for that job. The person who took the job on a temporary basis will have to take the test and could lose the job if he or she does not perform well on the test.

How do I prepare for the exam? What do I study?

The City of Columbus’ exams are all related to the requirements of specific job categories; they are not general tests of intelligence or ability. The first way to prepare for the exam is to get an exam announcement and read it carefully. It will provide a lot of information about: the form of the exam (written, oral, evaluation of training and experience); the weight given to each part; and the subjects to be tested. Once you know the content of the exam, there are a couple of approaches to getting ready. One is to use a review or textbook in the area to be tested. For example, if Writing Skills will be tested, a good grammar textbook may be the place to start. Another possibility is to look at the civil service review books (e.g., Arco series) in the library for sample questions and answers. Even if there isn't a review book for exactly the test you're taking, there may be others that include the same topics. In addition, many of those books contain general strategies for test taking such as how to stay calm, how to study, etc., and they can provide useful information to help in your preparation.

What does it mean when the exam announcement says “Promotional,” “Open Competitive” or “Qualifying Noncompetitive” exam?

For “Promotional” exams, applications will be accepted only from current City employees who meet certain criteria. When an exam is announced as “Open Competitive” or “Qualifying Noncompetitive,” applications will be accepted from anyone, either members of the public or City employees. For open competitive exams, the candidates are placed on a list based upon their performance. For qualifying non-competitive exams, the test is pass/fail and candidates are listed alphabetically.

What kinds of exams are there?

The City tests for a wide range of knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA's) needed to do specific jobs, and the type of test is chosen to match the KSA's to be tested. These are some of the terms that appear on announcements to describe different types of exams:

Training and Experience (T&E) Evaluation

A T&E is used when specific education or experience is a good predictor of success at a job. Often, you are sent a special questionnaire that asks about your education and work or volunteer experience in areas related to the demands of the job. Typically a T&E scoring system awards points based on the tasks that have been performed in a certain job or the classroom courses that were taken and passed.

Structured Oral Exams

An oral performance exam asks you to respond orally to a “make believe,” yet job-related situation. You may interact with a role player, describe how you would act, or make a presentation after studying written materials. You may be asked a set of questions and often, follow-up questions, which have been developed to measure important knowledge and abilities identified by a job analysis. Oral performance exams are used to test for interpersonal and communication skills, and for content knowledge. The questions are often asked and the answers rated by a panel, usually comprised of several experts in the subject matter.

Audio Simulation

In an audio simulation, you respond on paper to a series of job related situations, which are presented through an audiotape or orally.

Multiple Choice Exams

A written test used to measure general and/or specific job knowledge of one or more subjects. Candidates choose the correct or best answer from a list of three (3) to five (5) possible answers.

Other Written Exams

Essay or Writing Samples - Candidates respond to a question that could be about factual knowledge or a hypothetical situation. These tests are used as a method for assessing written communication skills, analytical skills, problem solving abilities, and job knowledge.



Work Sample/Work Simulation - A written simulation where candidates are presented with a situation similar to that which might be faced on the job. Another type of simulation involves the use of video or audiotapes as stimulus materials to which candidates must respond

using a written multiple-choice format, or completing a document that simulates that used on the job.

Performance Exams

These tests usually require the candidate to perform sample work behaviors of the job that are structured and standardized. The performance test is most nearly a replication or sample from the actual work situation and the candidate will demonstrate that he or she has the ability to perform an activity at the present time. Depending on the classification, the performance exam could be a typing test, equipment operation (vehicle or other), or a physical skills test.



These are the most frequently used kinds of tests. Others may be used, and they are usually described on the exam announcement.

EXAMINATION RESULTS



What's the usual amount of time to get exam results back?

The amount of time between taking a test and getting results varies. In general, you should count on at least two to three weeks. Some exams could take as long as one or two months for exam results depending on the number and complexity of the exam phases to be graded.

Why does it take so long? The reasons vary: some exams have components (e.g. Training and Experience Evaluations and writing samples) that require hand scoring. When there are many candidates the grading process may take longer. Most exams that are scored using a computerized method may have a shorter waiting period, but administrative processing usually still takes one week to ten days. So if you don't hear from us right away, sit tight. Every exam candidate always receives a written report of results.

How are the exams scored?

After all phases of the exam are completed, final scores are calculated for those candidates who participated in all phases of the examination process. Multiple-choice exam responses are read by an optical scanner. All other written exams and most performance exams are hand scored based on an established grading criteria.

1. Each candidate receives a raw score for each test component. **For example:** If a 100-question test is given and a candidate answers 78 of the 100 questions correctly, then that candidate's raw score is 78.
2. Multiple-choice items are analyzed (item analysis) to determine their appropriateness and accuracy based on candidate responses.
3. Problem items (e.g., incorrectly keyed) may be deleted from the exam after careful review of the item analysis.
4. Each raw score is transformed to a standard score by a process known as z scoring.
5. Each standard score is weighted (e.g. multiple choice 50%, performance 50%), and then the weighted components are combined for a total weighted composite score.
6. The passpoint is set and pass/fail scores are determined.
7. Passing scores receive preference points (e.g., veterans, seniority).
8. Final scores are calculated and score banded or ranked by score order.

What is Score Banding?

Score banding or grade banding is a method of grouping scores within a band. It can apply to all exams except Police and Fire promotional exams. Currently, the most commonly used method of banding is the 10-point fixed band method.

For example: scores greater than or equal to 70 and less than 80 would be placed in a band together = 70 BAND

10–Point Band Breakdown:

A score of 90 or greater = 90 band

A score of 80 through 89 = 80 band

A score of 70 through 79 = 70 band

After the grading of an examination has been completed, all candidates tested will be notified in writing of their exam results. If you pass the exam, you will be notified of which score band you are in on the eligible list. The eligible list will be used to provide hiring departments with names of candidates so that they can fill vacancies.

ELIGIBLE LISTS

What's an "eligible list"?

Every candidate who passes a civil service exam is placed on a list with other people eligible to be hired for positions in that job classification; it is called a "list of eligibles," or "eligible list." Candidates are listed in the order of their score band on the list, which is determined by their "final score." Final scores reflect scores on the exam, plus any points added for veteran's credits (or for "seniority points" on promotional exams.) Candidates are listed in alphabetical order (by last name) on noncompetitive lists.

Eligible lists created by Competitive Examination

1. Open Examinations:

After the completion of each open competitive examination two types of lists may be prepared:

- a) Preferred eligible list - includes the names of all provisional employees currently in the tested class who received a final passing grade and who satisfactorily completed the probationary period as of the date the list is established.
- b) Open eligible list - includes the names of all other applicants who received a final passing grade.

The names of eligibles on the preferred or open eligible list will be arranged in the order of the final banding or ranking based on test grades earned. The preferred eligible list is used before the open eligible list.

2. Promotional Examinations:

On promotional exams (not on open competitive exams), seniority points are added to the passing scores. In the nonuniformed classifications, candidates may earn up to ten seniority points for continuous service which accrued as of the last date of the test filing period in the eligible class or classes identified on the job announcement. Seniority points are computed as follows:

- a) One-half point for each six months of full-time service.
- b) One-half point for each twelve months of part-time service.

Eligible lists created by Noncompetitive Examination

After the completion of each noncompetitive examination, which has a qualifying test, an eligible list is prepared including the names of all applicants, placed in alphabetical order, who met the minimum requirements for the examination and passed all tests.

How long is an eligible list used for hiring?

Usually candidates will remain on an eligible list for up to two years. All eligible lists automatically terminate when they have been exhausted or when they've been replaced by a new list.

Can the public see the eligible lists?

Eligible lists are public documents. A copy of any eligible list established by the City can be viewed during working hours (8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.) at the Civil Service Commission, Room 600. Ask the receptionist to see the eligible list for the title you're interested in. If you want a copy of the eligible lists; there is a charge of \$.15 per page for all copies.

Must I take a test again when the eligible list expires?

Civil Service eligible lists are valid for up to two years. When the list expires, candidates must re-apply and take the exam again in order to continue eligibility. A new list will be established as a result of the new test.

Can I take the exam again if I'm not pleased with my score?

If you have taken any part of a competitive examination or noncompetitive qualifying examination for any classification, you cannot take the same exam again for twelve months after the date of your test results letter unless:

- 1. A new test is being administered the next time.
- 2. You are a current City employee. A current City employee can retake the exam in six months.
- 3. You failed a typing or data entry performance test for the classification.

4. The test is for the classification of police officer. Police officer candidates can retest twice in a twelve-month period.

How will taking the exam again affect my current score?

If you take an exam again for the same classification while your name is still on an eligible list for that classification, your score will be based on the second examination. You do not have the option of choosing the best examination score. If you fail the second exam while your name is on the current eligible list, your name will be removed from the eligible list.

What happens once my name is on the eligible list?

Candidates are considered according to their “score band.” Candidates within the highest score band are considered for a vacancy first.

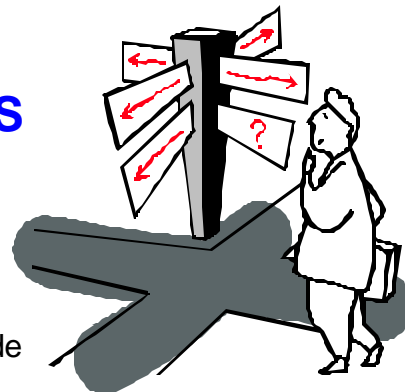
If a vacancy becomes available and your name is listed in the highest group of scores being considered, you will receive a notice from the Civil Service Commission office. Since other candidates may be notified as well, you may want to send a cover letter and resume to the hiring agency that is listed on the notice to help them to know more about your experience, education and/or training.

If you are selected for consideration for the position, you will be contacted by the city division having the opening and informed of the next steps in the hiring process.

DISQUALIFICATION OF APPLICANTS AND ELIGIBLES

Applicants may be rejected from consideration or refused admittance to an examination, and eligibles may be disqualified or removed from a competitive eligible list, or a certification list, for reasons listed in the Civil Service rules. To view the complete text of the Civil Service Commission rules, visit our website at www.csc.columbus.gov and click on [CSC Rules](#).

TEST-TAKING STRATEGIES FOR DIFFERENT TYPES OF EXAMINATIONS



TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE (T&E) EVALUATIONS

Your score for this type of test is determined only by the information you provide on the T&E evaluation form. The information you provide will be used to evaluate you for the job for which you have applied.

You are not able to add or change any information once the evaluation form has been submitted to the Civil Service Commission Office. The following tips may help you get proper credit for your experience.

1. Type or print all information neatly. You will not receive credit for information that cannot be read. Be as clear, concise and legible as possible.
2. Provide all relevant periods of employment, including self-employment, part-time employment, military service and unpaid or volunteer service.
3. Be sure to provide complete and accurate employer information (job title, work dates, hours worked, phone number, etc.), even if the employer has gone out of business or is deceased. If any of this information is missing, you may not receive full credit.
4. For any experience claimed in which an employer has closed (gone out of business) attach a pay stub, W-2, or any other verifiable information of this employment in order to receive credit.
5. It is up to you to tell us about the related experience you have. If you have important experience and abilities and do not put them on the T&E evaluation form, you will not be given credit for them.
6. If asked, describe the specific duties and responsibilities that demonstrate your abilities in the categories identified in the T&E evaluation form. If you have experience in a specified T&E category in more than one job held, identify each job title and explain the applicable duties and responsibilities.
7. Your experience may not be evaluated properly if you use words and phrases known only to your work specialty or location. Such special language includes abbreviations, initials or military jargon.
8. Some T&E's may be judged on the level of your experience and/or responsibility. Therefore, describe your experience, knowledge and/or abilities in terms of the **level** of responsibility, **complexity** or **importance** of accomplishments, and number of people you supervised.
9. If credit is being given for course work, be sure to provide complete information on any relevant course work you may have completed (course title, dates of course, where held, course credit).

10. Some T&E's are in multiple-choice format. Make sure you select the response that best describes your experience and/or education.
11. Sign and date your T&E evaluation form.
12. Failure to return your T&E evaluation form by the due date may result in your failing the entire exam process.

STRUCTURED ORAL EXAMS

Oral examinations are designed to evaluate to what degree you exhibit the knowledge, skills, abilities and personal characteristics necessary for performance on the job. Oral exams are usually conducted by a board (or panel) of subject matter experts.

1. Board Preparation
 - a) Board members are trained on the rating process,
 - b) Board members are instructed to ask the same questions to all applicants and to take notes,
 - c) Board members rate candidates only on the designated factors,
 - d) Board members do not have access to your application, resume, etc.
2. During the exam
 - a) Candidates will be introduced to the board members,
 - b) Candidates may be required to orally present information as a part of a written scenario, role-play, and/or respond to a prepared set of questions,
 - c) Candidates may be given an opportunity to summarize or make additional comments if time permits.
3. After the exam
 - a) Board members will independently rate your performance against specific standards,
 - b) Board members will rate you on one or more dimensions such as
 - oral communication
 - interpersonal relations
 - information analysis
 - problem solving
 - c) The analyst will total and average the ratings of the board members
4. How you can prepare
 - a) Study the job announcement and class specification and become familiar with the duties and requirements for the job for which you have applied.
 - b) Be prepared to demonstrate to the panel members that you possess the knowledge, skills and abilities required to perform the job by giving complete answers to the questions.
 - c) Be yourself. Answer questions honestly and directly. If you do not know the answer to a technical question do not be afraid to admit that you do not know. However, do not avoid questions simply because they are difficult. The panel

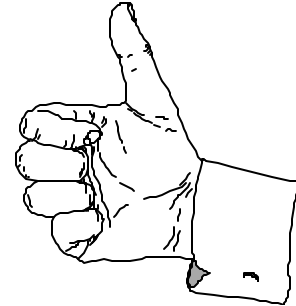
may be assessing your ability to deal with difficult or complex situations and your avoidance of difficult questions may convince them that you are unwilling or unable to deal with difficult situations.

- d) Do some serious thinking about the job. Ask yourself if it is really the type of job that you want and why. Try to determine what kinds of knowledge, skills and abilities would be required to perform the job and whether or not you have these.

Tips on Oral Communication and Listening Skills

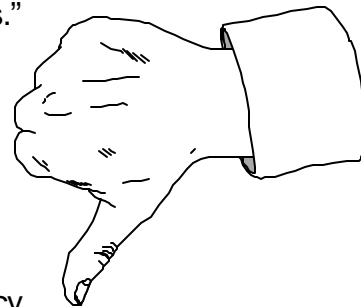
Do:

1. Use statements that completely express your thoughts.
2. Use appropriate grammar and vocabulary.
3. Maintain eye contact with the panel.
4. Ask for clarification on unclear points or points you are not sure of.
5. Take several seconds to organize your thoughts before you begin to speak.
6. Use encouraging facial expressions and gestures.
7. Speak at an appropriate volume and speed.
8. Practice your communication skills with friends, family, or co-workers and ask for their feedback.



Don't:

1. Interrupt the panel without an apology.
2. Intersperse speech continually with "ah's," "uh's," and "um's."
3. Repeat words or phrases like "you know," "right," "okay" or "you know what I mean."
4. Speak too softly, too loudly or too rapidly.
5. Look away from panel when addressing them.
6. Mumble so that words cannot be understood.
7. Ramble on, making the same points over and over.
8. Use slang terms or abusive language.
9. Use jargon known only to those in your profession or agency.
10. Gesticulate (wave hands and/or head) in a distracting manner.
11. Tap your pen, pound on table or jiggle feet in a distracting tense manner.
12. Snap, pop or chew gum.



MULTIPLE CHOICE EXAMS



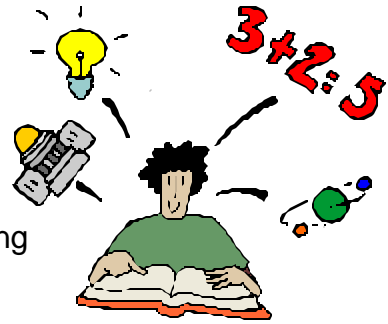
The Answer Sheet

Each question on a multiple-choice test may contain up to five alternative answers (A, B, C, D or E). You are to pick the best or most accurate answer for each question and mark your answers on the separate answer sheet that you are given during the examination. The answer sheet will be scored by computer so it is important that you follow marking instructions carefully.

When you use the answer sheet during the examination, follow these instructions:

1. Make good dark marks that completely fill in the rectangle.
2. Completely erase any changed answers.
3. Make one, and only one, mark for each question.
4. Use only the No. 2 pencil that you will be given during the examination. Do **not** use other pencils or pens.
5. Follow the test monitor's instructions carefully for marking your social security number on the answer sheet.
6. Although you are usually permitted to mark in the test booklet, your score will be based only on the answers recorded on the answer sheet.
7. Frequently check that the question number in the test booklet matches the number of the answer you are marking on the answer sheet.

TEST TAKING STRATEGIES



To help you do better on the examination, here is a list of test taking strategies you should remember.

1. Get enough sleep the night before. This will help you maintain your concentration for the duration of the test. Wear comfortable clothes. The test facility may be hot or cold. You cannot change the room, but you can put on a sweater.
2. Read all directions carefully.
3. Keep track of how much time you have to complete the examination.
4. Do not be afraid to go with the first answer that comes to your mind. Often, first instincts are correct.
5. If you find a question difficult or confusing, skip over it and come back to it after you have finished the test. Do not spend too much time on any one item. If you skip a question be sure to make a corresponding "skip" on your answer sheet.
6. Try to think of the answer to the question before looking at the alternatives. If you do not know the answer, try to eliminate those choices that are clearly wrong. This makes the chance of picking the correct answer easier. After eliminating the obviously wrong answers, pick the best alternative from those that are left.
7. Be careful not to be misled by alternatives that are only partially true. Always select the best answer.
8. For most exams, there is no penalty for guessing, so even if you must guess, try to eliminate alternatives that are clearly not the best answer and answer every question.
9. If you have time, go back and look at every question and answer. Make any changes that are necessary.
10. Remember, the test monitors are there to assist you with procedures. If you have any questions, ask for assistance before the examination begins, or as soon as the question arises.

Analyzing Test Items

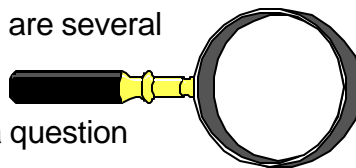
Item analysis is one technique that can help you perform better on a multiple-choice test. Item analysis helps to reduce mistakes and simplify difficult questions.

1. Read each question carefully. Try to answer the question before you look at the alternatives.
2. Identify clue words that harden or soften a sentence. Words such as **all**, **never**, **none**, and **every**, harden a statement by indicating that there are no exceptions. As a rule, alternatives with these words are less likely to be correct. Words such as **sometimes**, **may**, **generally** and **possibly** soften a statement. As a rule, alternatives with these words are more likely to be correct.
3. When reading test questions, do not be afraid to mark in the test booklet if this is permitted in the instructions. You must mark your answer on the answer sheet to get credit for the response, but you will not be penalized for putting marks in the test booklet. Mark the test questions in a way that helps you to remember important words or phrases. Here are some suggestions.
 - a. Use slash marks (/) to break up sentences into smaller segments. This will make you attentive to each piece of information.
 - b. Circle key words that tell what the sentence is all about. This will help you get a "handle" on the sentence and will make it easier if you have to hunt for an answer later.
 - c. Underline words that harden or soften the meaning.
 - d. Put marks next to each alternative (e.g., "G" = "clearly a good answer," "X" = "clearly a bad answer"). If you have to reread the question or answers, this will save time.

Error Analysis

Each one of us has weak areas in our test taking behavior. There are several possible reasons for choosing an incorrect response. Once you've identified those potential problems, they can be avoided.

The following are six possible reasons for incorrectly answering a question along with possible methods of avoiding those errors.



1. **Marking the wrong space on the answer sheet** - the solution to this problem is to frequently check the number of the question you are marking on the answer sheet against the number of the question you are answering in order to be sure they match. Additionally, check each answer choice on the answer sheet to ensure you are marking the letter of the answer you have chosen. As an additional check, after you complete the exam, go back over every question and make sure the answers match.

Since there are a limited number of questions on the exam, careless errors such as these are costly.

2. **Misreading a question or answer by overlooking a key word or phrase** - the solution to this problem is underlining. Underlining makes those key words and phrases stand out when choosing an answer. Once you have underlined the key words and phrases, check the details of the possible answers with the details you underlined, one by one. If every detail doesn't match, consider that answer suspect and try another. Always keep in mind you are looking for the best possible answer.
3. **Not knowing the meaning of one or more key terms** - to solve this problem, reread the sentence to determine its meaning without worrying about the meaning of that particular word. Try to understand the general message of the sentence or paragraph. The meaning of the unfamiliar word should become clearer once you understand the general context within which it has been placed.
4. **Not understanding a question because it is complicated or too difficult** - to solve this type of problem, skip the question until the end of the test. When you return to the question, use slash marks to break up the material into small segments. Concentrate on one segment at a time to determine what is important. Read the possible answers before reading the question. This tells you what to concentrate on while reading the question. Also, focus on the topic sentences that are usually the first and last sentences of a question. Read for the general meaning and do not get bogged down by individual words or phrases you do not understand.
5. **Missing a question because you are unaccustomed to comparing combinations of information** - this is a problem of rearranging information in the correct way so that it makes sense. Underline critical pieces of information and then compare the information with the possible answers point by point. Also, concentrate on eliminating the wrong answers first.
6. **Selecting an answer that "looked good"** - there are a number of factors that can cause you to fall for incorrect answers that look good.
 - a) An incorrect answer may contain an exact phrase from the question.
 - b) An incorrect answer may contain a phrase or sentence that is used out of context.
 - c) An incorrect answer may overstate what the question has stated. For example, if the question says, "Some officers...", the incorrect answer may say, "All officers..."

Listed below are some specific strategies for avoiding the tendency to fall for incorrect answers that look good.

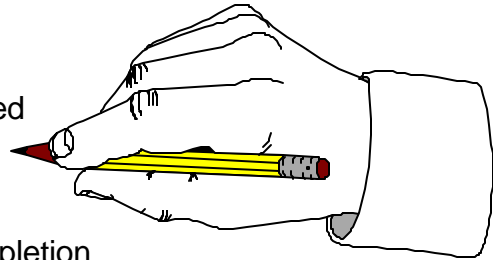
- 1) Have an answer in mind before you look over the alternatives. This will make you less susceptible to choosing an answer that looks good.
- 2) Do not forget to use the method of marking each alternative to indicate

what you think about it (e.g., bad, good or possible) before choosing one.

- 3) Stick strictly to the facts or rules of a question. Do not fall for answers that stretch or exaggerate the facts or rules described in the test question itself. This is the time to watch out for words that harden or soften a phrase such as only, never, always, whenever, all, etc.

WRITING SAMPLE/WORK SAMPLE EXAMS

Writing samples and work samples are typically designed to assess your ability to analyze, interpret, and/or extract certain information and respond in a given format (e.g., memo, letter, form, or other). Examples include situational exercises, form completion, task completion (e.g., preparing a budget), or planning and organizing exercises. For a writing or work sample test, you may be rated on the following dimensions.



1. Completeness/Accuracy - graders will look at how much relevant information from the scenario is in your response and how much of the information is correct.
2. Spelling/Word Choice - graders will review your response to make sure words are spelled and used correctly.
3. Organization - graders will determine how well you have organized the information in your response.
4. Sentence Structure - graders will review your response to make sure you use complete sentences with correct grammar.

Writing Sample Test Taking Tips

1. Read all instructions carefully before beginning
2. Organize your thoughts on a separate sheet of paper before putting them in the exam answer booklet.
3. Print your response legibly. You will not receive credit for any information the graders are unable to read.
4. Be sure your response is complete, well organized, and that it addresses the pertinent issues of the scenario.
5. If a dictionary is allowed for the exam you are taking, use it to double-check your spelling and word usage.
6. If the scenario is presented to you by way of videotape, take notes while viewing the tape and begin organizing your thoughts.

Performance Exams

For job classes such as clerical, labor and maintenance, craft and trades, and recreation, a performance exam is one of the most valid methods for determining a candidate's ability and/or skill to perform certain job tasks. For example, candidates applying for a job as a Tree Trimmer will be expected to demonstrate their ability to climb a tree, tie special knots, and remove tree limbs, while at the same time demonstrating their skill in using special tree trimming equipment. A Typist Clerk performance exam may require typing a text at a minimum word per minute speed using a computer and/or typewriter.



Performance Test Taking Tips

1. Practice on or use similar equipment if possible. Call the Civil Service Commission Office to find out what type or brand of testing equipment is being used.
2. Wear comfortable clothing and clothing appropriate to the type of test being given (e.g., do not wear dress clothing to a tractor mower test).
3. Do not be overly anxious to get started. Listen to and follow the instructions you are given at the exam. It is important that you understand the examination process completely before beginning in order to assure yourself the opportunity to perform your best and to avoid possible injury in potentially hazardous testing situations.

Do not attempt to take performance tests that could be potentially hazardous if you do not have the proper experience in that area. You could risk injuring yourself and those around you at the test site. Always follow safety rules when operating equipment.

METHODS FOR STUDYING

Concentration Techniques



1. **Make the material more interesting or meaningful.** One way to do that is to apply it to yourself by relating it to your own personal experiences. For example, when studying a manual or reference materials for a test, try to relate the concepts to something you have done or something you have seen someone else do.
2. **Eliminate distractions from your environment.** These distractions compete for your attention, interfere with your concentration, and "turn off" your memory of the material. It is difficult for people to pay attention to several things at the same time. Instead, they usually switch back and forth, paying attention first to one thing and then another. Unfortunately, any material that did not receive attention will not be remembered. This means that listening to the radio while you are studying, or studying in a noisy area will leave gaps in your memory of the material you are trying to learn.
3. **Eliminate internal distractions.** Avoid trying to learn or memorize material when you are tired or hungry. Fatigue reduces the amount of material that you can remember. Both fatigue and hunger make concentration difficult. One way to avoid internal distractions is to schedule study times and to set realistic goals.
4. **Use the check-mark technique.** This technique involves keeping a separate sheet of paper beside you and marking a check on it each time your mind wanders. This makes you aware of how often you are not concentrating and forces you to keep focused. Too many checks could indicate that a different study time could allow you to concentrate better and use your time more effectively.

Reading Comprehension Techniques

1. Page-at-a-Time Method

This method involves stopping at the bottom of each page and summarizing the content in a few sentences. Ask yourself, "What did the author say on this page?" The page-at-a-time method makes you concentrate by forcing your mind to focus on the material while it is still fresh.

2. Organizational Pattern Method

This method involves determining how the author is presenting the material. Once you have identified an author's organizational pattern, you are able to better organize both your note taking and your thinking. There are several types of organizational patterns:

- a) Process Pattern - In this pattern, steps are presented in sequence. An office

procedure, for example, would be described step by step.

- b) Increasing Importance Pattern - This pattern presents information from the least important to most important.
- c) Decreasing Important Pattern - Using this pattern, the author organizes information from most important to least important.
- d) Cause and Effect Pattern - With this pattern, when you identify a cause or a problem, you are prompted to look for the effect or the solution.
- e) Compare or Contrast Pattern - This pattern involves presenting similarities or differences among theories, ideas, procedures, etc.

3. Paragraph Method

This method involves stopping at the end of each paragraph and summarizing it into one sentence. Simply ask yourself, "What was this paragraph meant to convey?" This helps to ensure that you understand what you are reading. It will also be helpful to identify the types of sentences and paragraphs you are reading. This approach allows you to identify where the important information is in the material.

- a) Identify types of sentences by function
 - Topic sentences are controlling ideas
 - Supporting sentences explain and prove the main idea
 - Concluding sentences sum up the discussion
- b) Identify types of paragraphs
 - Introductory paragraphs give the main idea
 - Expository paragraphs present new information
 - Transitional paragraphs tie information together
 - Summarizing paragraphs restate main ideas and draw conclusions

4. S Q 3 R

The symbols **SQ3R** stand for **SURVEY, QUESTION, READ, RECITE, and REVIEW**. These five elements make up a set of study habits that almost always guarantee success.

- a) **SURVEY** - To survey is to find the limits or borders of an area. Surveying the material to be studied is the first step in the SQ3R method. This step allows you to distinguish between important information and trivial detail.

The most obvious way to survey a body of information is to scan it from start to finish. By skimming over the pages, you will get an idea of what is to come and how long it will take to cover the material. This will help you to break the assignment down into reasonable time blocks. In most textbooks, this type of survey is made much easier through chapter summaries. Chapter summaries can give a quick overview of the important parts or pieces of the chapter. If you look at the chapter itself, you will see that it is usually broken down into

smaller parts or pieces through the use of headings. Bold headings introduce big or important elements; smaller headings introduce sub areas of these important elements. These headings can provide an important road map through the chapter.

- b) **QUESTION** - Most people need a reason to do things. The same is true for studying or reading a textbook. Try to formulate questions about the text you are about to read. Finding the answers to these questions will give the material that you are reading more meaning.

There are several ways to develop these questions. One way, is to begin with the list of headings from the chapter outline. Write a question for each major and minor heading.

- c) **READ** - For most people, reading means the same thing as studying. Reading is important, but it will be done more effectively when the survey and question steps have been completed.

Material should be read in small “chunks” that you identified in the survey stage. One section might be all of the material under a major heading. If several pages are included under a major heading, divide it up into smaller sections separated by minor headings. Try to determine how many sections will be read in a given study session. Once you are able to answer the questions you developed in the previous step, you can move on to the next section.

Be sure you understand the material in the section you are reading before you move on to the next section. A good time to take breaks is between these sections, not in the middle of them.

It is important that you understand the material you are reading. One way to do this is to keep a list of all unfamiliar terms and their meanings. The quicker you get to know the meaning of all the terms, the more effective your studying will be. You might want to keep a notebook of these terms as well as all important terms. You will find that this notebook of terms will be a big help in preparing for the examination.

To become a more active participant in the studying process, you might also want to mark or underline the text while you are reading. This will also help you to focus on the major ideas and keep you from getting bogged down with details. Reviewing the material will be easier since you have already given yourself some hints and associations that will aid in later recall.

Highlight or underline key words and concepts and make notes to yourself in the margins. If you choose to use the underlining and marking method, here are a few guidelines:

- 1) Read through the entire section once before doing any underlining or

marking.

- 2) Don't mark or underline too much; the value of the technique lies in highlighting only the most important material.
- 3) Use ink if possible so that the underlining and notes do not disappear or become unclear in the course of studying.
- 4) Use symbols as much as possible. For example, use "?" as a symbol for questions you have; use "*" to stand for a particularly important idea.

The act of identifying and choosing the most important material to be highlighted will make recalling this information in the chapter easier at a later point in time.

- d) **RECITE** - An important step in this method is the recite step. Recitation will help you to remember the information that you just read.

Recitation does not have to be out loud, but it should be formal. Don't just look over the information and say to yourself, "Now I know it." The point is that you should recite the information that you are trying to learn. This can be done in several ways. One popular method is to close the book and try to repeat what you have just read. Then check to see if you were correct. A second way is to answer questions about the material you have just read.

Reciting material with the assistance of another individual is also helpful. You can ask each other questions about portions of the material, which will make you recite the material in a very formal way. Choosing someone who is familiar with the material is not necessary. The person only has to be able to recognize that what you have said is what is written in the book or in your notes.

In order to be most effective, recitation should take place quite soon after you've first learned or read the material. This is important because the greatest amount of information is lost or forgotten right after it is first learned.

Don't try to recite too much information at once. Depending on the number of pages covered, this might be all of the information in one major heading or even one subheading. A whole chapter is certainly too large a unit for recitation purposes.

- e) **REVIEW** - The last step of the SQ3R method is review. When you have finished studying a block of material such as a chapter, you should review what you have learned. This can be done through reciting or through answering specific questions. The point is that you should go back over the material once you think it has been learned. You must feel confident that you have learned the "old" material before you begin to learn "new material." This will help you to determine whether more time must be devoted to previously

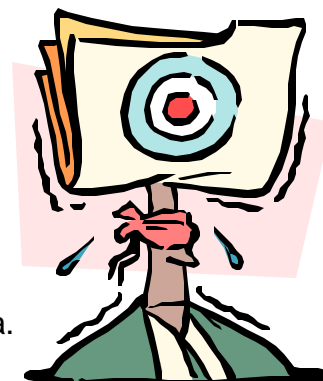
studied material.

The second form of review is done just before you begin a new study session. In this form of review, you are actually preparing yourself for new learning by strengthening previous learning. This helps to ensure that any old learning that is needed as a basis for new learning is correct and available.

The final form of review is done before a test and is most effective in a group with other test takers. This cuts down on some of the drudgery of pre-test studying and can increase the meaningfulness of the information. It is sometimes easier to remember the information if you think back to who said what and how the review conversation went.

DEALING WITH TEST ANXIETY

Test anxiety is an inability to think clearly regarding or during a testing situation that prevents you from doing your best on the exam. It is usually characterized by feelings of nervousness, fear or dread, and specific symptoms can include insomnia, loss (or increase) of appetite, and an inability to concentrate. During an exam, symptoms include confusion, panic, mental blocks, or nausea. Do you ever experience any of these symptoms before or during a test? If so, you are not alone; many people suffer from test anxiety.



Following are some techniques for dealing with test anxiety. However, first you need to understand that test anxiety, just like most forms of anxiety, come about because of what you tell yourself and your innermost thoughts regarding the test and your abilities. Irrational beliefs regarding fear of failure, concerns regarding what others will think about you, and the need to be perfect come into play. Some test anxiety techniques to try are:

1. THOUGHT SUBSTITUTION

Start substituting the negative thoughts and feelings that you have regarding the test with positive thoughts. For example, instead of telling yourself "I'm never going to do well on the test because I always get low scores," you can substitute that thought with a more positive one such as "I have control over whether or not I do well on the test. I have studied the material supplied to me to the best of my ability and I am pleased with the progress I have made." Making positive statements to yourself is one way to reduce the anxiety that you feel.

2. BREATHING

If you find yourself going over the material for the test or actually in the exam and you start developing some of the symptoms of test anxiety, one technique you can use immediately is to focus your attention on your breathing. By doing this, you calm some of the physical symptoms and sensations you may be having. You can take several deep breaths, hold each for 3 - 5 seconds, and then slowly exhale. You should feel yourself getting more relaxed and your heart rate slowing down.

3. MUSCLE RELAXATION

Another technique you can try before and during the testing situation is to tense and relax your muscles. If you are aware of a particularly tense part of your body, which is usually the shoulder area, you should first make the area even tenser. Pull your shoulders back, arch your back and tense your shoulder muscles even more tightly and hold the tenseness for 5 seconds. Then slowly release it. You should begin to feel the tension floating away as you release the tenseness. You can do this several times.

There are some other things that you should do before the exam to help reduce stress. If you already have an exercise routine, you should exercise the day before and the day of the exam. Studies have shown that regular exercise helps to control tension and stress. The day before the exam you should check again the time and location of the exam, take a complete break from studying and relax before you go to bed, and try to get a full night's sleep. These steps will help you be refreshed and alert throughout the exam.

You can also reduce the exam day stress by locating the test site, parking facilities and parking fees prior to the test day. Map out or plan how to get there as well as an alternative route. It may be helpful to actually travel the route to determine how long it will take to get there. Be sure to allow additional time for any unforeseen delays such as traffic or bad weather.

The day of the exam get up in plenty of time to avoid rushing. Eat a nutritious meal, but do not overstuff yourself and avoid heavy foods. Arrive at the exam site with time to spare, and RELAX! By this time, you should be thinking positively about the outcome.

The Civil Service Commission believes that the information provided in this information guide will aid you in applying for Civil Service employment and preparing for Civil Service examinations. If you should have any questions regarding a job opening please call our job line at (614) 645-7667. If you have a question regarding a specific test being given, call our office at (614) 645-8301 and ask to speak to an analyst. Thank you for your interest in employment with the City of Columbus!

Information Guide
Rev 01/03